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TECH TICKER

SEMICONDUCTORS

Global chip sales rose slightly in '02

Global sales of chips edged up 1.3 percent to \$140.7 billion in 2002. For the first time since 2000, the Semiconductor Industry Association anticipates that information-technology spending on hardware will increase this year. The trade group said it expects chip revenue to increase 19.8 percent in 2003 to \$169.3 billion.

The slow rise in revenue continues a recovery that began in the fourth quarter of 2001, the SIA said.

Fourth-quarter revenue of \$37.6 billion was up 1.9 percent from \$36.9 billion in the third quarter, the trade group said.

Semiconductor sales fell to \$12.53 billion in December, down 2.3 percent from November's \$12.83 billion but up 23.1 percent from the \$10.18 billion of a year earlier.

OPTIONS

Lawmakers express expensing opposition

A bipartisan group of 40 congressional members -- including three Silicon Valley Democrats -- wrote U.S. accounting rule-makers Monday to register their ``strong opposition to any proposal" that would require companies to treat stock options as an expense. The letter was co-authored by Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, and signed by San Jose Democratic legislators Zoe Lofgren and Mike Honda.

The lawmakers were responding to the Financial Accounting Services Board's call for comments regarding how U.S. rules differ from recent proposals by the International Accounting Standards Board. Although they didn't address that issue, they contended that there's no reliable method for valuing stock options and that expensing ``would effectively destroy" plans that dole out options to most workers.

FASB's comment period, which ended Saturday, also drew more than 40 letters from the American Electronics Association, TechNet, Nasdaq and individual companies.

CIRCUIT BOARDS

HP hires Soletron for \$1.4 billion job

Soletron, the world's No. 2 maker of electronics for brand-name companies, won a \$1.4 billion, five-year contract to build circuit boards for Hewlett-Packard.

DSL

SBC offers service at \$34.95 a month

SBC is offering its SBC Yahoo DSL service, which combines SBC's digital subscriber line service with Yahoo's broadband Web content, for a discounted rate of \$34.95 a month to customers who sign a 12-month contract.

The price will go up to \$49.94 a month -- the regular price for SBC's standard DSL service -- at the end of the 12-month contract. Customers who cancel service before the end of 12 months will be subject to a \$200 early termination fee.

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